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Henry Ford Community College Library Survey

NORMAN E. TANIS

THE HENRY FORD Community College library was faced with a number of problems in November, 1958, which needed answers urgently. Basically, the difficulty was a lack of norms for determining the adequacy of a junior college library.

Standards for junior college libraries have been the object of considerable discussion in recent years. Library committees and accrediting agencies have been attempting to establish some criteria to indicate the percentage of a student body that should be accommodated in a library and how much square footage should be allotted to each student. In each instance, the study group has been careful not to offer any precise formula since each institution has different kinds of demands placed upon its library by students and faculty. The setting in which the college is located and the presence or absence of other colleges and universities in the area tend to make impossible any single formula.

Another point to consider, largely ignored in professional journals, centers around the library usage habits in a junior college with a commuting student body. The Henry Ford Community College library staff felt that this factor, among several others, created a situation in the library which needed careful study.

NORMAN E. TANIS is Librarian of the Henry Ford Community College, Dearborn, Michigan.

Obviously, formulas used in four-year institutions are not applicable to junior colleges because of the difference in curriculum and type of research done by the students. General education, with its emphasis upon many different sources instead of a single textbook, is an important part of the two-year curriculum and has a decisive bearing upon student use of the library. In addition, the many terminal and technical courses offered by the Henry Ford Community College make its curriculum even less analogous to the traditional four-year college.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Henry Ford Community College library staff decided that the best way to determine whether or not the library was performing its function adequately would be to question students concerning their patterns of library usage. Although the way in which the library was used in its cramped quarters might not furnish the data necessary to predict usage patterns in some future new library, still, it was felt that this information would give a valuable insight into the way the library was functioning on the campus.

To determine the time of day students used the junior college library most frequently, how much time the students studied at home, and how much time they spent in public libraries, the staff distributed a questionnaire to 800 students. In the

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questionnaire, students were asked whether or not they would use the college library on Saturdays and Sundays if it were open, and why they used libraries in Dearborn and in nearby cities. Space was provided for them to suggest ways in which the library could be made more useful.

Questionnaires were completed by 195 students, almost one out of every five of the 1,076 day students. The questionnaires were distributed to the students in their English classes because the library staff felt a better cross section of the student body could be reached in a required course in which students in all the college programs were enrolled. The results of the survey indicated that a medium cross section of the students responded. It is important to remember, however, that the Related Trades and the Business Management Training divisions of the college were not represented in this survey.

One hundred and fourteen of those who responded were residents of the city of Dearborn; 81 were non-residents from surrounding communities. Of the students who responded, 61.5 per cent were freshmen and 38.5 per cent, sophomores.

STUDY HABITS

The responses indicated that the majority of students did most of their studying at home instead of in a campus facility. Most students spent eight or more hours per week studying at home; 60.7 per cent of the residents and 60.5 per cent of the non-residents spent 12 or more hours per week studying at home.

The questionnaire revealed tha 22.2 per cent of those responding did not use the community college library at all; 12.4 per cent of the residents and 34.2 per cent of the non-residents composed this group of non-users. The survey showed that most of the students used the library from two to 12 hours per week. It also became apparent that non-residents used the college library less than resident students. For example, 34 per cent of the residents and only 17.7 per cent of the non-residents used the library from eight to 20 hours per week.

Table III shows that 80.4 per cent of the students filling out the questionnaire did not use the library at all during the evening hours. Ninety per cent of the non-

TABLE I

Number of Hours Students Spent Studying at Home

	Residents		Non-Residents		Total	
Number of Hours Students Study at Home Per Week	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response
	112		81		193	
0– 2 hours	2	1.8	2	2.5	4	2.1
2– 4 hours	3	2.7	6	7.4	9	4.7
4– 8 hours	16	14.3	7	8.6	23	11.9
8–12 hours	23	20.5	17	21	40	20.7
12–20 hours	37	33	36	44.4	73	37.8
More hours	31	27.7	13	16.1	44	22.8

TABLE II

Number of Hours Per Week Spent in the Henry Ford Community College Library

	Residents		Non-Residents		Total	
Number of Hours Students Used the College Library	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response
	97		79		176	
0 hours	12	12.4	27	34.2	39	22.2
1– 2 hours	8	8.3	9	11.4	17	9.7
2– 4 hours	20	20.6	12	15.2	32	18.2
4– 8 hours	23	23.7	17	21.5	40	22.7
8–12 hours	20	20.6	9	11.4	29	16.5
12–20 hours	13	13.4	5	6.3	18	10.2
More hours	1	1	0		1	.5

TABLE III

Number of Hours Per Week Students Use the Henry Ford Community College Library at Night

	Residents		Non-Residents		Total	
Number of Hours Per Week	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response
	78		80		158	
0 hours	55	70.5	72	90	127	80.4
1– 2 hours	5	6.4	2	2.5	7	4.4
2– 4 hours	10	12.8	1	1.2	11	7
4– 8 hours	7	9	4	5	11	7
8–12 hours	1	1.3			1	.6
12–20 hours			1	1.25	1	.6
More hours						

residents and 70.5 per cent of the residents made up this group.

Perhaps an explanation for this light use of the library during evening hours can be found in the nature of the junior college student body: Many of the Henry Ford Community College students hold jobs during the late afternoon and evening hours. In addition, most of the students, if not all, commute to the campus. The answers students gave to questions about the hours they used the library reflect this work and commuting pattern.

Table IV shows that during the morning hours between 9:00 A.M. and 12:00 P.M. the library was used most heavily (49 per cent of those who replied), while between 12:00 noon and 2:00 P.M., 36.2 per cent of the students used the library. The survey showed that 85.3 per cent of the respondents did not use the library after 2:00 P.M. in the afternoon. Only

TABLE IV

Time of Day the Library Was Used

	Residents		Non-Residents		Total	
The library was used by the students during these periods	96		67		163	
9:00 A.M to 12:00 NOON	47	49 %	33	49.3%	80	49.1%
12:00 to 2:00 P.M.	37	38.5%	22	32.8%	59	36.2%
2:00 to 4:00 P.M.	5	5.2%	8	11.9%	13	8 %
Evening	7	1.3%	4	6 %	11	6.7%

TABLE V

Other Areas in the College Used for Study

	Residents		Non-Residents		Total	
Number of Hours Per Week	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response
	68		47		115	
0 hours	16	23.5	13	27.7	29	25.2
1– 2 hours	22	32.4	18	38.3	40	34.8
2– 4 hours	9	13.2	9	19.1	18	15.7
4– 8 hours	17	25	6	12.8	23	20
8–12 hours	4	5.9	1	2.1	5	4.3
12–20 hours	0		0		0	

eight per cent used the library from 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M., and 6.7 per cent used the library in the evening. The heavy morning use is a characteristic that differentiates the urban, non-resident junior college from the traditional, residential four-year college.

From the figures in Table V, it is apparent that the library is only one of the places on campus used for study. The gymnasium balcony, the student cafeteria, restrooms, hallways, empty classrooms, and automobiles were also used as places of study.

DEARBORN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Of particular interest to the college and public librarians of Dearborn was the way Henry Ford Community College students used their public libraries. The college librarians wanted to know how much time students were spending in the Dearborn public libraries. More important, why were students using other libraries?

A study of Table VI shows that 63.8 per cent of the responding resident students used the Dearborn public libraries from one to eight hours per week; 16.7 per cent of the resident students used the pub-

TABLE VI

Number of Hours Henry Ford Community College Students Were Using Dearborn Public Libraries

	Residents	
Number of Hours Per Week	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response
	102	
0 hours	33	32.4
1– 2 hours	33	32.4
2– 4 hours	15	14.7
4– 8 hours	17	16.7
8–12 hours	2	2
12–20 hours	1	1
More hours	1	1

TABLE VII

Reasons Why Students Used Other Libraries

	Residents		Non-Residents		Total	
Reasons Students Gave for Using Other Libraries	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response
	44		36		80	
Proximity to Library	20	45.5	24	66.7	44	55
Better Collection of Materials	11	25	7	19.4	18	22.5
More Convenient Hours	8	18.2	1	2.8	9	11.2
Less Crowded	2	4.5	3	8.3	5	6.3
Less Noisy	3	6.8	1	2.8	4	5

lic libraries four to eight hours per week, while most of the resident students used the libraries from one to two hours per week. Understandably, the non-residents did not use the Dearborn public libraries to any significant extent.

Thirteen students stated they used the Detroit public library system, and seven students indicated they used the Wayne University library.

Table VII shows that students gave five reasons to justify their use of other libraries. Understandably, a larger group of non-residents, 66.7 per cent, compared with 45.5 per cent of the residents, used other libraries because they were more convenient than the H.F.C.C. library. Twenty-five per cent of the residents and 19.5 per cent of the non-residents used other libraries because they had more convenient hours, were less crowded and less noisy than the H.F.C.C. library.

TABLE VIII

Possible Ways of Improving the Library—Student Suggestions

Ways of Improving the H. F. C. C. Library	Residents		Non-Residents		Total	
	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response
	108		40		148	
More Seating Capacity	42	38.9	17	42.5	59	39.9
Better Collection of Materials	30	27.8	8	20	38	25.7
Open More Hours of the Day	5	4.6	2	5	7	4.7
Conference Rooms to Study Together	9	8.2	1	2.5	10	6.8
Less Noisy	7	6.5	1	2.5	8	5.4
Other Suggestions	8	7.4	6	15	14	9.4
Library Satisfactory	7	6.5	5	12.5	12	8.1

TABLE IX

Longer Library Hours

Students Were Asked If They Would Use the Library If—	Residents		Non-Residents		Total	
	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response	Number Reporting	Per Cent of Response
The library were open Sat. and Sun.	111		81		192	
Yes	74	66.7	27	33.3	101	52.6
No	37	33.3	54	66.7	91	47.4
The library were open 4:30–6:00 P.M.	97		80		177	
Yes	41	42.3	18	22.5	59	33.3
No	56	57.7	62	77.5	118	66.7

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE HENRY FORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE LIBRARY

A total of 148, or 75.8 per cent, of the respondents took advantage of the opportunity provided on the questionnaire to add comments or observations on possible ways to improve the Henry Ford Community College Library. In many ways, these comments constitute the most interesting aspect of the whole study.

The many suggestions concerning ways to improve the library seemed to indicate that students were concerned about this matter. Of the group offering suggestions, 39 per cent thought the library could be

improved most by increasing the seating capacity, while 25.7 per cent advocated increasing the total collection of books, periodicals, and pamphlets. Further, many students mentioned specific subject areas which were weak, such as psychology, English, and journalism. Obtaining multiple copies of heavily used reserve books was also suggested as an improvement.

Eight students asked that the library be kept quieter in order to provide a better study atmosphere. Fourteen students made suggestions which did not fit into any of these categories. Only twelve students, or 8.1 per cent, found the library satisfactory as it was.

MAINTAINING LONGER LIBRARY HOURS

Of the students who replied to the questionnaire, 67.7 per cent said they would use the college library if it were open on Saturday and Sunday. Only 33.3 per cent of the non-residents said they would use the library on weekends.

SUMMARY

The Henry Ford Community College library staff gave attention to evaluating the library service in terms of its own peculiar situation. The following conclusions came from the study.

1. The present seating capacity of the library is inadequate to serve the peak loads in the morning. Although attempts can be made to urge students to use the library later in the day, the nature of the student body and the returns of the survey indicate that little can be done to change these library habits. At the same time, a generous amount of space must be allotted to each student in order to accommodate the large number who come and go as they find time between classes. This kind of traffic demands a larger amount of space.

2. The library should develop more and better resources in order to enrich the curriculum, supply reference materials, meet the need for multiple copies of reserve books, and strengthen weak areas in the book collection.

3. The library must attempt to shoulder some of the load which is being assumed by the public libraries by: (a) urging more faculty members to point out to their students the strong areas in the college book collection, (b) maintaining library resources adequate for the calls made upon it by students and faculty, (c) cooperating with the public librarians by keeping them informed of the demands which will be made upon them, (d) keeping the library open on some part of the weekend.